

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-13 SSO-00

INRE-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 OMB-01 SAM-01 CU-02 FBO-02

OPR-02 OC-06 CCO-00 A-01 SY-05 SCCT-01 NEAE-00 /104 W
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INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE PRIORITY 67

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM

CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG

CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER

CIA WASHDC

COMSIXTHFLT

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FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

DIA WASHDC

CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER

USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 7003

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION AUG 19: CHRISTIAN WAR OF WORDS; LITTLE
MILITARY ACTION.

REF: BEWRUT 6986

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1. SUMMARY: CHRISTIANS MAKING EXTRAVAGANT CLAIMS AND THREATS IN APPARENT EFFORT DEMORALIZE PALESTINIANS, PERHAPS AS PRELUDE TO SERIOUS PUSH IN HIGH METN. CONFIRMATION THAT SYRIANS DID ENTER HAMMANA IN METN AFTER ALL, BUT ONLY TEMPORARILY. OTHERWISE, NO GROUND MOVEMENT IN AREA. VERY HEAVY ARTILLERY BOMBARDMENTS IN EAST AND WEST BEIRUT. OTHER AREAS FAIRLY QUIET. JUNBLATT HOLDS BIG PEP RALLY, BUT ENLISTEES IN HIS NEW ARMY STILL SCARCE. FRANGIE MAY NOT TRY OUST KARAME AFTER ALL, UNDER PHALANGIST PRESSURE. PHALANGISTS ALSO TAKING SOFT LINE ON ISSUE OF SARKIS' OATH OF OFFICE. ARAB LEAGUE NEGOTIATORS MAKE NO PROGRESS. END SUMMARY.

2. RIGHTIST PROPAGANDA OFFENSIVE. RIGHTIST SIDE SEEMS TO BE ATTEMPTING LARGE-SCALE CAMPAIGN TO DEMORALIZE PALESTINIANS/LEFTISTS WITH WORDS AND THREATS OF ACTION. METN CAMPAIGN (SEE PARA 3 BELOW) IS SO FAR LARGELY BLUFF. MARONITE LEAGUE PRESIDENT CHAKER ABOUSLEIMAN SAID AUG 18 THAT PALESTINIANS WOULD RETREAT FROM MOUNTAINS WITHIN NEXT FEW DAYS. ON MILITARY NEGOTIATING LEVEL, PHALANGE HAS TRANSMITTED THROUGH AL MILITARY COMMANDER GHONEIM DEMANDS THAT PALESTINIANS ABANDON MOUNTAINS, AGREE TO CALENDAR TOY CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES ON ALL FRONTS AND ACCEPT SYRIAN CONDITIONS FOR TRIPARTITE MEETING, ALL WITHIN 48 HOURS. IF NOT, PHALANGE SAYS, "RADICAL MILITARY SOLUTION" WILL BE NECESSARY.

3. METN NON-CAMPAIGN. WE NOW HAVE REPORT INDICATING THAT SYRIANS DID IN FACT ENTER HAMMANA FEW DAYS AGO, THEN WITHDREW. POSSIBLE INTENT WAS TO DEMONSTRATE TO PALESTINIANS THAT THEIR SUPPLY LINES FROM SOUTH TO THEIR HIGH METN BASTIONS ARE VULNERABLE. WE UNDERSTAND SYRIAN FORCES STILL POSITIONED NEAR HAMMANA SO AS TO DOMINATE LOC'S. L'ORIENT SPEAKS OF MASSIVE SYRIAN TROOP MOVEMENTS IN AREA SUGGESTING OFFENSIVE AGAINST MTEIN AND AINTOURA MAY PROCEED BOTH FROM CHRISTIANS IN WEST AND SYRIANS TO THE EAST. TRYING TO MAKE BEST OF SITUATION,
LEFTISTS
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SAY CHRISTIANS AFRAID TO ATTACK IN HIGH METN AREA UNTIL THEY RECEIVE SYRIAN PERMISSION, SINCE CHRISTIANS ALONE HAVE INSUFFICIENT FORCES.

4. BEIRUT AREA. EXTREMELY HEAVY ARTILLERY SHELLING BETWEEN EAST AND WEST BEIRUT CONTINUES, PERHAPS TOTAL OF 600 ROUNDS NIGHT OF AUG 17-18. HEAVY ATTACKS BY FIRE ALL ALONG CONFRONTATION

LINE. LEFTISTS SAY HAVE STORMED RIGHTIST POSITIONS IN CITY CENTER AREA AND REPELLED RIGHTIST ATTEMPTS INFILTRATE THEIR POSITIONS NEAR AIN EL-RUMMANEH. LEFTISTS ALSO CLAIM PHALANGISTS AND NATIONAL LIBERALS QUARRELING AMONG THEMSELVES ABOUT 25-POUND TAX COLLECTED FROM PERSONS CROSSING CONFRONTATION LINE AT MUSEUM. IN RAS BEIRUT, EMBASSY IS TAKING SOME SPORADIC SMALL ARMS FIRE, AND STUDENT AT AUB WAS SHOT NIGHT OF AUG 18-19.

5. OTHER AREAS. FIGHTING BETWEEN PALESTINIANS AT TRIPOLI AND CHRISTIANS BASED AT ZGHORTA CONTINUES. LEFTISTS CLAIM THEIR GUERRILLAS AMBUSHED SYRIAN VEHICLE IN BEKAA NEAR TEBNINE AND KILLED THIRTY SYRIAN OFFICERS AND TROOPS. IN SOUTH, LEFTISTS CLAIM SYRIANS CONTINUE HEAVY ARTILLERY FIRE AGAINST THEIR POSITIONS IN VICINITY OF JEZZINE.

6. JUNBLATT'S CALL TO ARMS. KAMAL JUNBLATT SPOKE AT LARGE RALLY AT HIS HOME TOWN OF MOUKHTARA, LAUNCHING "VIBRANT APPEAL" TO THE MASSES TO MOBILIZE "FOR THE DECISIVE BATTLE OF THE MOUNTAINS AND THE KEY BATTLE FOR THE CHOUF." HE PROPOSES TO HOLD SERIES OF SUCH MEETINGS IN VARIOUS PARTS OF LEBANON. HE SAID, "LET US MAKE SININE, ZAAROUR, TARSHISH AND MTEIN ANOTHER TELL ZAATAR." PRESS NOTES THAT PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION NOT VISIBLE AT MEETING. FROM OTHER SOURCES, WE UNDERSTAND HIS EFFORTS SO FAR NOT IMPRESSIVE: SOME MERE 80 FORMER LEBANESE ARMY OFFICERS AND TROOPS HAVE SIGNED UP, VIRTUALLY ALL DRUZE.

7. LEBANESE POLITICAL NOTES. AT BEHEST OF EDDE'S NATIONAL UNITY FRONT, SAEB SALAM CONTACTED HIS CONFIDENTIAL

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NEWFOUND FRIEND PIERRE GEMAYEL AUG 18 AND ASKED HIM TO TRY TO REDUCE INDISCRIMINATE EAST-WEST BEIRUT ARTILLERY SHELLING, NOTING THAT ARAFAT HAS AGREED TO SO SAME. GEMAYEL AGREED. (SHELLING ON RESIDENTIAL AREAS WAS LESS NIGHT OF AUG 18-19.) NUF ALSO DISCUSSED IDEA OF MEETING WITH ISLAMIC GROUP LEADERS AND BOTH GEMAYEL AND CHAMOUN. AMINE GEMAYEL MET WITH SARKIS AND DISCUSSED LATTER'S ASSUMPTION OF OFFICE IN SEPTEMBER. REPORTS INDICATE PHALANGE HOLDS VIEW THAT SARKIS NEED NOT TAKE OATH BEFORE PARLIAMENTARY QUORUM TO ASSUME OFFICE, AND THAT CHAMOUN HOLDS CONTRARY VIEW. COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING? PRESS REPORTS PHALANGIST SOURCES TO EFFECT THAT PIERRE GEMAYEL HAS PERSUADED PRESIDENT FRANGIE NOT TO ATTEMPT CALL MEETING OR

DUMP PRIMIN KARAME AT THIS TIME.

8. PALESTINAIN NOTES. ARAFAT AND QADDUMI ARE SAYING ANOTHER PALESTINIAN PILGRIMAGE TO DAMASCUS IMPOSSIBLE UNTIL SYRIANS SOFTEN POSITION ON NON-JUNBLATTI LEBANESE LEFTIST PARTICIPATION IN QUADRIPARTITE COMMITTEE. VOICE OF PALESTINE RADIO SAYS PLO FLATLY REJECTS FRANGIE'S CONDITIONS FOR PEACE. ARAFAT AND LAA LEADER LT. KHATIB MET AUG. 18, AFTER WHICH KHATIB ACCUSED SYRIA OF SEEKING PARTITION. LEFTIST PRESS REPORTS ARAFAT MAY VISIT SEVERAL COMMUNIST COUNTRIES SOON.

9. ARAB LEAGUE EFFORTS. AL DEPUTY KHOLI HAS DELAYED EXPECTED RETURN TO BEIRUT, MAY NOW FIRST VISIT ASSAD IN DAMASCUS. AL FORCES COMMANDER GHONEIM MET ARAFAT IN EFFORT ARRANGE CEASEFIRE. AL-MUHARRIR SAYS NEW SAUDI AL FORCE OF 500 TROOPS ENTERED LEBANON FROM SYRIA AUG 18.) AS-SAFIR COMMENTS THAT EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT SADAT APPARENTLY ABANDONED HIS OPPOSITION TO ARAB LEAGUE SUMMIT AFTER MEETING WITH KING KHALID OF SAUDI ARABIA. NATIONAL UNITY FRONT SAYS SYRIAN-EGYPTIAN RAPPROCHEMENT OUGHT TO PRECEDE MEETING, IF IT IS TO ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING. HUNT

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